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Our Central African Mission.

By BERNARD R. TURNER.

MPOLOKOSO'S BAND.

THE L.M.S. in Central Africa is responsible for the Country between the south end of Lake Tanganyika and to the east, as far as Lake Mwero. *The people* are of Bantu Stock and comprise the tribes of the Alunda, Awemba, Atawa, Alungu, and Amambwe.

This district is in the North-East corner of Rhodesia, and is under the British South Africa Co's Administration. The natives are for the most part happy and peaceable, tribal wars being a thing of the past.

This is the Society's Mission in the land, opened by **David Livingstone.** He journeyed through the country where our work is now in progress, and *stayed* for some time quite near places where we now have our permanent work.

The first Expedition to found our Central African Mission was in 1877 as a direct outcome of the enthusiasm created by the funeral of David Livingstone in Westminster Abbey in 1874. The sanguine hope of many intense admirers of the great missionary and explorer was rewarded—when the late Mr. Robert Arthington, of Leeds, offered £5,000 to begin Evangelistic work in Central Africa. The immediate goal was Lake Tanganyika and many were the hardships encountered in the first fruitless endeavours to reach that great inland sea. After many, many months of trial and difficulty Tanganyika was reached. Ujiji, on the east coast of the lake, is sacred

to the memory of the meeting of Stanley and Livingstone. Mission stations were established at Urambo, Uguha and Ujiji, but at what cost! It would be difficult to find a story of more devoted and quiet enthusiasm than that shown in the establishing of these mission stations. Continuous sacrifice of strength and even of life was never spared in these early beginnings. Only one Missionary was left at the end of five years, and yet new recruits were ever ready to take the place of the fallen and those whose health was broken by the scourge of fever and the exceedingly trying climatic conditions. By the year 1890, eleven had died, eleven had been compelled to retire, and still the few left fought manfully on in their endeavour to bring "Light" to the heart of the Dark Continent. At great cost a steel life-boat, the "Morning Star," was launched on Tanganyika, to be followed by the steamer, the "Good News." In this way the Missionaries got to know fairly well the peoples living on the shores of the Lake, and eventually settled in 1887 at Fwambo (now Kawimbe, near by), 30 miles from the south end of the lake. From here the work grew until we finally occupied **Mberezi,** our most westerly station. **Mpolokoso** is our latest occupation, and that was made possible because of the Arthington bequest for *new* work. The Mission station at Urambo was eventually handed over to the Moravians, while Tanganyika work to the north was relinquished. The south of the lake has been visited periodically from Niamkolo—our southerly lake station. Latterly, however, *all* such work and itineration has been suspended on account of sleeping sickness.

Sleeping Sickness has now reached us, travelling down either side of Lake Tanganyika, and the Government has felt it to be an imperative need that those people who dwelt on the lake shore and near such large rivers as the Luapula, Lualaba and Lovu, should be removed to the higher plateaux, thus to be moved out of the "infected areas." This action was humane "to save the people alive," but has unavoidably caused some hardship to those who have been suddenly called to live under conditions that were not identical with those that they had left.

For our five stations there are now twelve Missionaries and their wives, who must not be forgotten, in reviewing the work.

Much of the work, however, is carried on by the **Native Teachers,** who are trained at the main station and return to their appointed villages—carrying on the work of teaching and preaching. In this way the scattered populace is reached—as we believe, that if Africa (and certainly Central Africa), is to be evangelised, it will be accomplished by the African.

In travelling to-day in Central Africa one never meets with slaves, the awful condition of Africa that confronted Livingstone at every turn is no more. Our earliest missionaries saw the last of those darkest days, and we have in our mission men and women who were redeemed by the mission when only boys and girls. Some of these are now teachers, and notably our Head Teacher, as he is a signal witness, showing what such an one may become when carefully trained. He, after occupying several places of trust, finally was sent to Mpolokoso to begin school work and to hold services until the time should arrive when an English Missionary could take charge of the work.

When the Missionaries first settled among the people they were compelled to act as magistrates, to hear all the disputes. Some cases were connected with witchcraft and its attendant evils, while other cases needed patience more than anything else. Now, fortunately, we are saved from the majority of such cases, as the people take them to the Native Courts for redress.

The people are quiet and phlegmatic in temperament. Their wants are simple. They see the white man's better condition, but it awakes little response in their breasts. They simply regard him as a different species. Very, very slowly do they awake to a new sense of what life *may* be for them. Children of nature, harmless, but ruled by weaknesses and

degrading passions. It is only by degrees and slowly they step into a higher plane of life. It is to such we take *the Christ*, with healing in His wings. Already have many received the new point of view which is brought about by a changed heart and the enlightened and still enlightening conscience.

The Women generally, have a fine physique—they are erect and have a very dignified carriage, due to the universal practice of carrying their water pots on their heads. They are, however, depraved and extremely difficult to influence deeply in later life. The men have for a hundred years been more or less accustomed to obedience at their Chief's command—or when slaves of the Arabs or servants and workers for the white man. But the women have had no such salutary discipline. This brings us to the consideration of the *greatest need*—the *need of the Women.* The Missionaries have for a long time felt how imperative was the need of a **Boarding School** or Girls' Dormitory. For this, single Lady Missionaries, who are Educationalists, are most urgently required, so that young girls may be taken and trained. At present our teachers are often compelled to choose heathen wives ! This is especially sad, as in cases of this kind there can be no Christian home life. Our work will suffer until this need can be remedied. At present, however, the *Missionaries' wives* are doing whatever they can. Bible Classes for women are held—bead work is taught and sewing classes are held on some of our stations. This much must be acknowledged, but we want *wholly* to get hold of the women, because they it is who teach and keep up the belief in witchcraft, who keep the old evil customs going. If we can convert the women our work will be more than half done.

The Religious tendencies of the people are *mainly Animistic.* They believe in a Supreme Being or Great Spirit, but all notions of Him are of the most indefinite nature. Their worship centres round the Forest Spirits and their Ancestral Spirits. They are the victims of superstitious fear, as they believe that illness is the work of spirits. They are deluded by the witch doctors, who, while no doubt being possessed of much useful medical knowledge, use it almost entirely for selfish ends. These evil men thus gain position and power, chiefly no doubt through their knowledge of poisons, and where these witch doctors have unchallenged sway, there the " Mwavi " or " poison ordeal " is still practised, the people are undoubtedly " all their life-time subject to bondage." But the old order is giving way, and Liberty and Light are being brought in by the Gospel.

Central Africa is cursed with **Polygamy.** There can be no real or true home life where polygamy is rampant. The man with *many* wives was looked upon as the important man. It is only Christ who places woman in her right place. Even in our Mission village we have many polygamists. But they need our sympathy, as it is difficult for them to dissociate themselves from these phases of their old heathenism. One of our Village headmen, a polygamist, lately hanged himself because he felt the troubles of his many wives unbearable. Very slowly, but surely, it is passing, and we are beginning to see young people married on some of our Mission stations by the Missionary—pledged to regard sacred the bond of wedlock, and viewing polygamy as a sad relic of a heathen and unenlightened past.

Education is playing its important role, even in Central Africa. Naturally it is of a very elementary nature. After the initial stages are passed, great keenness is often displayed. Boys and girls and even old men and women are most anxious to learn to read and write. The " Kalata Fever " (*i.e.*, great desire to write letters or small notes) has "caught on," and almost every man that passes from one village to another, wherever mission schools are established. he carries—a few little scraps of paper—letters of young people to their friends. They may not contain much, but we see in this the dawning intelligence, the desire to rise.

The Mission has adopted the Nyasaland Educational Code, and so works, in matters Educational, in harmony with the other Missions

in Central Africa. Our Mission has also sent many of our young teachers to the Free Church of Scotland's Training Institution at Livingstonia on Lake Nyasa. We are grateful to be able to take advantage of such a splendid Institution, and they have sent to us some of their teachers to take the place of ours that are under training with them. It is splendid that this *Spirit of Unity* is enabling us to do more in our common work for our Master.

The Medical Work has done much in certain districts to make way for the Gospel. We have two hospitals where patients are received and major operations performed. It is difficult to gauge the usefulness of this work the beneficent results of which are apparent to all.

The Industrial side of the enterprise has been strongly developed. Useful trades are taught. Bricks are made. Young men are employed in the garden and learn the "white man's methods." The blacksmith's shop is of great service to the countryside, while in the carpenter's and cabinet departments, youths are "bound" by Government Contract for a definite number of years, and learn to do excellent work that would do credit to any English journeyman.

Thoroughness is the order of the day, and is practised in every detail—as we believe in this way character is built up and consolidated. For a short time each day there is school for these youths who are being technically trained, so that the training shall be as far as possible an "all round" one. "Hand with heart" and "eye along with the mind." The class of work actually turned out has received warm commendation from all, including the Administrator of Northern Rhodesia.

This is no time to slacken the pace. **Mohammedanism** is swiftly though quietly advancing southward. Are we awake to the danger? Is the Crescent or the Cross to be victorious in Africa? Already Mohammedanism has claimed the people of many large areas, who, but for the coldness and indifference of His Church, might have been won for the Master. Are we, the supporters of the L.M.S., doing all we can for our Central African Mission? Islam may be upon us in this field of work at any time. Are we *all* prepared, ready, doing, giving, our *utmost*.

God calls us to consider these questions, and the answer can only be found in a whole-hearted consecration to Him.

Photo by] THE FATHERS FOUGHT : THE SONS BUILD AND FURNISH HOMES. [*Bernard Turner*